

Eight Women of Faith

Michael A. G. Haykin

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WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Eight Women of Faith

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Published by Crossway
1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Cover design: Connie Gabbert

First printing 2016

Printed in the United States of America

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Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-4892-5

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-4895-6

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-4893-2

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-4894-9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Haykin, Michael A. G., author.

Title: Eight women of faith / Michael A.G. Haykin.

Description: Wheaton : Crossway, 2016. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016000448 (print) | LCCN 2016012254 (ebook) | ISBN 9781433548925 (tp) |

ISBN 9781433548956 (ePub) | ISBN 9781433548932 (pdf) | ISBN 9781433548949 (mobi)

Subjects: LCSH: Christian women—Biography. | Women in Christianity.

Classification: LCC BR1713 .H39 2016 (print) | LCC BR1713 (ebook) | DDC 270.092/52—dc23

LC record available at <http://lccn.loc.gov/2016000448>

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God created he him;
male and female created he them.

Genesis 1:27 (KJV)

To John Friesen, Bev Offner, and
the staff and guests of Muskoka Bible Centre,
Huntsville, Ontario
2008–2015

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Foreword

Genesis 2 tells us that God created a garden with “every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food” (v. 9). God told Adam to eat freely of every tree except one. But rather than focusing on the abundance God had offered freely, Adam and Eve turned their focus on the single thing that was off-limits. And the rest is human history.

Both within the church and outside it, we too have treated in a similar fashion the biblical admonition against women preaching: we focus on the single thing that is off-limits and thereby fail to see the abundant opportunities and roles God *has* clearly offered, some of which are compellingly portrayed in the stories presented in this book. Likewise, the biblical admonition has led too often to extrabiblical limitations on women, as well as unbiblical oppression, also reflected in the societal restraints these eight women experienced during their lives. This kind of failure toward women—unjustly imposed limitations on their personhood and soul equality—has sometimes led to a secondary failure: the failure to see and tell women’s stories clearly, truthfully, and well.

Thus, there exists an abundance of works on the lives of women in the church that present readers with unrealistic saints, not flesh-and-blood women. Such accounts make good fairy tales but not just or suitable examples of the true life of faith. On the other hand, much of today’s retrospectives on women in history tend to focus, understandably and sometimes rightly, on limitations

placed on women. Women have been and still are denied much, both in the church and in the culture at large.

This book's snapshots of a mere eight women from a mere two centuries offer an astonishing array of roles and achievements by women in a time when women were not so much second-class citizens as not citizens at all. Yet despite (and perhaps because of) such obstacles, what women have contributed and accomplished is rich and varied. Here in these pages we meet queen, wife, theologian, hymnist, novelist, missionary, daughter, and friend. Even more importantly, we meet women of faith whose lives manifested the grace and glory of God through their faithful obedience to the roles to which they were called, whether in singleness or marriage, in sickness or in health, in riches or in poverty, and, ultimately, in death.

The facets of womanhood represented in *Eight Women of Faith* shine brilliantly. This abundance is particularly striking within the early modern era represented by the lives detailed here. The period hinges on a significant turning point in both human history and church history: the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation's emphasis on faith alone and Scripture alone gave birth to the modern individual (and thus the evangelical tradition)—and it is the lives of women that most clearly reflect the dramatic historical shifts that took place as a result. It is women of faith, particularly evangelical faith (with its emphasis on individual salvation), who mirror most clearly this great shift in human history and culture that elevated human agency and equality. These developments drew me to my own study on an evangelical woman of this era, Hannah More, the British poet, abolitionist, and reformer of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—and they drew me to this fascinating work as well.

The portraits Haykin paints of these wildly different women reduce them neither to their roles nor to their religion, but rather show how their faith informed, shaped, and fulfilled their earthly callings. Furthermore, regardless of their relationships to men (sin-

gle, married, wife, daughter, mother), the women are presented as individuals in their own right, as influenced as they are influential in the roles they fill. Margaret Baxter and Sarah Edwards, for example, are shown as faithful servants of the gospel who are as much served by as servants to their respective husbands, Richard Baxter and Jonathan Edwards. The theology embodied by the written works of Anne Dutton, Anne Steele, and Jane Austen models the abundance in God's garden: we can obey the command not to eat the forbidden fruit and still enjoy a feast abundant enough to nourish all of the faithful.

The lives here demonstrate the truth of Jane Austen's words, applicable to men and women equally, that "Christians should be up and doing something in the world." The women in this book, each in her own way, did just that. After reading about them, you will want to, too.

Karen Swallow Prior
Liberty University, Virginia

Introduction

The word *feminism* first appeared in the English language in the late nineteenth century.¹ Yet debates about the role and status of women in society had been going on for a considerable period of time before that. Take, for example, the historical era of the British Civil Wars (1638–1651) and the Republican government of the Puritan Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) that followed these wars in the 1650s. It is a period of history that has been well described as “a world turned upside down.” Questions were raised about so much that had been taken for granted, and among these questions were ones about the role of women.

The Quakers and Women Preachers

The Quakers, for example, who emerged as a potent force in the 1650s, proclaimed that there were no spiritual differences between men and women, and therefore there should be no distinction in ministry. Margaret Fell (1614–1702), wife of the Quaker leader George Fox (1624–1691), asserted her right to preach in her best-known work *Women’s Speaking Justified, Proved and Allowed of by the Scriptures* (London, 1666),² as did a few other Quaker women in the 1640s and 1650s, like Elizabeth Fletcher (c. 1638–1658) in Oxford and Martha Simmonds in London, and this sometimes against Quaker male leadership.³ Jacqueline Broad has noted that Margaret Fell’s arguments in favour of female preaching rest on a principle of spiritual equality, or the

idea that both men and women have the supernatural light of Christ within them. But for Fell, the ability to hearken to that light implicitly requires that women possess a natural capacity to discern the truth for themselves, to exercise strength of will, and to exhibit moral virtue or excellence of character. In these respects, Fell's arguments for female preaching contain an implicit feminist challenge to negative perceptions about women's moral and intellectual abilities in her time.⁴

Puritan Response to Quaker Views about Women Preachers

This brief discussion of the Quakers is significant, for Quaker women preachers reinforced in the mind of more mainstream Puritans, like the Baptists, that having female preachers was definitely wrong.⁵ In 1645, before the emergence of the Quakers, when representatives of the Calvinistic Baptist churches in what is known as the Western Association met, the question was asked whether a woman could speak in the church. The reply was clear: "A woman is not permitted to speak at all in the church, neither by way of praying, prophesying, enquiring, 1 Cor. 14.34f., 1 Tim. 2.11f."⁶ The same question was raised ten or so years later, after the Quaker movement had begun. This time it was the Midland Association where the question was asked. The same answer was basically given along with the reason for women's silence: the "inferiority of their sex" and to prevent any "usurping of authority over men." Nevertheless, five exceptions were given when a woman could speak in church:

1. To publicly give a testimony of conversion when seeking baptism and church membership.
2. To give a report if she had been involved in seeking the restoration of a wayward church member.
3. If she had been sent with a message from another congregation (are they thinking of Phoebe here, Romans 16:1-2?)
4. If she needed the church's help and had to lay out that need before the church.

5. If she had been “disfellowshipped” because of sin and was seeking forgiveness by the congregation and reconciliation.⁷

Women Essential to Puritan Nonconformity

Despite these restrictions, in mainstream Puritan groups—Baptists, as well as Congregationalists and Presbyterians—women did play critical roles in two key areas. First, they played a critical role in teaching children and servants in the home in accord with the marginal note in the Geneva Bible’s rendering of Deuteronomy 21:18, “It is the mother’s duty also to instruct her children.”⁸ Proponents of the state church feared this Puritan emphasis on the family as a school of piety, for, in their minds, it weakened the parish church.⁹

Then, in opening their homes to Puritan ministers, women often played a key role in the establishment of Puritan congregations. For example, Mrs. Dorothy Hazzard (d. 1675) seceded from the parish church of her husband, Matthew Hazzard, in 1640 to establish what later became Broadmead Baptist Church. The church actually began with Hazzard and four men meeting in the Hazzard home, which, of course, was also the home of the parish minister! Within three years the church had 160 members. Not surprisingly, this congregation also appointed deaconesses in the 1660s and 1670s. The first deaconess to be appointed was Mary West in 1662. After her death she was replaced in 1673 by a “Sister Murry,” and by 1679 three more women had been appointed. Following 1 Timothy 5:9, these women were required to be widows over the age of sixty who agreed not to pursue remarriage. They were to take care of the physical needs of the sick in the congregation and be ready to “speak a word to their souls as occasion requires.”¹⁰ As Patricia Crawford rightly concludes, “women were essential to Nonconformity,” both its emergence and its growth.¹¹

The Apostle Paul and the Modern Day

The key roles that women played in the advance of Puritan and Nonconformist congregations have strong biblical precedent. For instance, a close reading of Romans 16:1–16 reveals the truth of the remark by Roger Gryson that “there is no doubt that Paul was the beneficiary of numerous instances of assistance from women in his work as an apostle.”¹² Of the twenty-seven believers mentioned here in Romans 16, ten of them are women, with a number of them being commended for their hard work in the Lord (Mary, v. 6; Tryphaena and Tryphosa, v. 12a; Persis, v. 12b) and others being especially recognized for their help to Paul (Phoebe, vv. 1–2; Priscilla, vv. 3–4; Rufus’s mother, v. 13b). Paul’s remarks in this chapter of Romans have to be viewed against the cultural milieu of his day that frequently disparaged women.

Today, thankfully, the misogynistic trends of certain areas of Western culture have been challenged, and the issues that Christians face in this regard are somewhat different from those of Paul. A strong feminist movement in Western culture has effectively produced a crisis of masculinity in many areas of Western thinking. From the disparagement of women, our culture has swung in many respects to the opposite extreme, the disparagement of men. And in the midst of this, the church needs to be found faithful to the biblical witness. In a culture being swamped by a tsunami of feminism, the great danger for the church is to have a knee-jerk reaction and fail to appreciate what the apostolic generation, and our Puritan and Nonconformist forebears knew: the vital importance of women for the life of the church.

The Genesis and Nature of This Book

This book—really an extended essay comprising eight different historical and textual vignettes—seeks to remind contemporary Christians, especially evangelicals, of the vital role that women have played in the history of our faith. Although I began lecturing in the 1990s on women in church history, the immediate inspira-

tion for this book lies in a suggestion made to me by my good friend Jim Fraser, a high school teacher on the Simcoe County School Board, during a week that I was teaching at Muskoka Bible Centre, Ontario, in the summer of 2013. He pointed out that Eric Metaxas had just brought out his *Seven Men: And the Secret of Their Greatness*,¹³ and that I should do a comparable book on women. I was eager to follow up on this suggestion as I recognized the real need for such a book in the life of the church. I am very thankful for Jim's ongoing encouragement of my writing on this topic.

I had come across past books such as Samuel Burder's *Memoirs of Eminently Pious Women of the British Empire* (1823), a three-volume expansion of an earlier volume by Thomas Gibbons that had first been published in 1777. But books like this were long out of print. Much more recently Jamie Janosz wrote *When Others Shuddered: Eight Women Who Refused to Give Up*,¹⁴ which focuses on eight nineteenth-century figures. In many ways I felt that earlier centuries, especially the eighteenth century, were critical to investigate, especially due to the fact that it was in the eighteenth century that Western culture launched into the "brave new" project of reconfiguring society entirely on the basis of human reason and experience. How did Christian women in that era respond to the challenges around them?

The book that you hold in your hands is the result of the interplay of these past events and suggestions. Along the way I have been privileged to teach some of this material not only in my classes at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary but also in one-day conferences at Calvary Baptist Church of Lenexa, Kansas (thanks to Pastor Brian Albert especially), and Emmanuel Baptist Church, Otisville, Michigan (thanks to Pastor Leroy Cole). A good portion of these chapters was also given in morning sessions of a Bible week at the Muskoka Bible Centre in the summer of 2014, and I am deeply thankful to John Friesen, CEO of the Centre, for the opportunity to do this and for all of the MBC staff who

Introduction

helped facilitate this. Finally, I am very thankful also to Linda Reed for the invitation to coteach a course, “The Great Women of the Christian Faith,” this past June at Heritage Theological Seminary, which helped me to focus the chapters of this book.

In some ways, the book falls into two parts. The first two chapters, those on Lady Jane Grey and Margaret Charlton Baxter, explore women’s lives in the church prior to the significant changes of the eighteenth century. Jane speaks of the way that women made the faith of the Reformation their own, and Margaret shows how women helped men in ministry, in this case, her husband, Richard Baxter. I explore these themes by looking at certain written texts, either by the two women or about them. The next six chapters then constitute a prolonged essay on what it was like to be a Christian woman in the eighteenth century, and written texts again play a central role in the chapters. Anne Dutton, a highly competent theological author, helped serve as a spiritual guide through her books; Sarah Edwards, who left virtually no print footprint, nonetheless reveals the way some Christian women have had profound experiences of God for the blessing of the church; Anne Steele is a pioneer of women hymn writers, in which women helped the church worship through song and melody; the diary of Esther Edwards Burr, the daughter of Sarah Edwards, is a fabulous window on the vista of Christian friendship, a long-neglected area of Christian living. Ann Judson was a pioneer missionary with her husband and became something of an icon for generations of women missionaries who followed her; and, finally, there is a chapter on Jane Austen, far and away the most famous of all of the women in this book, who was also a serious Christian, though this is not often remembered.

May the Holy Spirit be pleased to use this book for the good of both men and women in the church of the Lord Jesus.

Dundas, Ontario

July 31, 2015

The Witness of Jane Grey, an Evangelical Queen

“Faith Only Justifieth”

It is February 10 in the year 1554. We are in a room in the Tower of London, where the Lady Jane Grey (1537–1554), who had been Queen of England for little over a week the previous year—from July 10–19, 1553—is imprisoned. She has been condemned to death by her cousin Mary I (1516–1558), also known to history as “Bloody Mary.” Though Mary, a die-hard Roman Catholic, is determined to end Jane’s earthly life, Mary also wants to save Jane’s soul. So she has sent one of her most able chaplains, a Benedictine monk by the name of John Feckenham (c. 1515–1584), to speak to Jane and convince her of her theological errors.¹ Feckenham was no stranger to theological debate, since he had debated a number of leading Protestant theologians in the early 1550s, men such as John Hooper (1500–1555) and John Jewel (1522–1571). He may well have thought that a young woman such as Jane would be hard-pressed to withstand the power of his reasoning.

Jane recorded the conversation after Feckenham left her. According to Jane's account—and we do not have a similar account from Feckenham, though there seems no reason to doubt the veracity of Jane's recollection—after Jane had confessed her faith in the triunity of God, she affirmed that people are saved by faith alone. Feckenham responded to this by citing 1 Corinthians 13:2, “If I have all faith . . . but have not love, I am nothing.” In other words, Feckenham was maintaining that salvation was the result of both faith and love shown by good works. Jane stood her ground:

Jane: True it is, for how can I love him in whom I trust not? Or how can I trust in him whom I love not? Faith and love agreeth both together, and yet love is comprehended in faith.

Feckenham: How shall we love our neighbour?

Jane: To love our neighbour is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and give drink to the thirsty, and to do to him as we would do to ourselves.

Feckenham: Why then it is necessary to salvation to do good works and it is not sufficient to believe.

Jane: I deny that and I affirm that faith only saves. But it is meet for Christians, in token that they follow their master Christ, to do good works, yet may we not say that they profit to salvation. For, although we have all done all that we can, yet we be unprofitable servants, and the faith only in Christ's blood saveth.²

Who was this remarkable young woman and how did she come to be in this precarious position in the infamous Tower of London? In some ways, Jane's story is a difficult one to tell since it cannot be understood without due consideration of the politics swirling her life. So as we remember her story, while our focus is going to be on her Christian faith, the political scene cannot be ignored. Jane was the granddaughter of Henry VIII's (1491–1547)

youngest and favorite sister, Mary Tudor (1496–1533), and was thus that wily monarch's great-niece. During Jane's life she stood fourth in line to the English throne after Henry's three children—Edward VI (1537–1553), Mary, and Elizabeth (1533–1603)—and was elevated to the crown after the death of her cousin Edward VI in 1553. Thus any consideration of Jane's life inevitably involves looking at the politics of the day.

Jane's Early Days

Jane Grey was born to Henry Grey (1517–1554), the Marquis of Dorset, and his wife, Frances (1517–1559), the niece of Henry VIII, at their palatial Leicestershire home, Bradgate Manor, early in October 1537. She appears to have been named after the queen of the day, Jane Seymour (c. 1508–1537), the third wife of Henry VIII and the mother of the future Edward VI.

Jane's parents were highly ambitious, callous individuals who balked at nothing to get ahead. They initially hoped that they could marry Jane off to Henry VIII's only son, Edward, who had been born in the same month as Jane. Thus Jane's parents imposed on her a rigid system of education, requiring her to master Latin, Greek, French, and Italian, so as to make her attractive to the future monarch. In 1546, when Jane was nine, she was sent to Henry's court to live under the guardianship of Queen Katharine Parr (1512–1548), the sixth and final wife of Henry VIII. All of this was part of her parents' selfish scheme to marry her to Edward and so advance their standing in society. But in the providence of God this led to Jane's coming under the influence of Katharine Parr, one of the most charming and intelligent women of the day, a woman who, moreover, was a genuine Christian. In the words of one of her chaplains: "Her rare goodness has made every day a Sunday."³ It appears to have been the case that it was during this stay in the household of Queen Katharine that Jane came to a living faith in Christ.⁴ As Paul Zahl has noted, Katherine was "Jane's real mother in Christianity."⁵

In 1547, though, Katherine Parr was widowed as Henry VIII died, and as a result Jane soon returned to her parents' home. Henry was succeeded by his son Edward, who was crowned Edward VI on February 20, 1547. He was but nine years of age. Yet he was surrounded by a number of godly counselors, including Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was determined to make England a bastion of the Reformed faith.⁶ The great French Reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) actually wrote a letter to Edward's guardian, his uncle Edward Seymour (c. 1500–1552), in which he likened Edward VI to King Josiah. And in time the young English monarch was indeed like Josiah, eager to have his subjects learn biblical truth. Of a hundred or so extant treatises from Edward's hand, a number clearly evidence Edward's commitment to the evangelical faith.

When Jane returned to her parents' home in Bradgate, they seem to have considered her a "symbol of failure and a wasted effort—and they treated her accordingly."⁷ Jane's response was to pour herself into her studies. She began to excel in Greek and even entered into correspondence with such continental Reformers as Martin Bucer (1491–1551), then living in Cambridge, and Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) of Zurich.⁸ She was growing in grace and becoming articulate in her faith, though there is also evidence that she was strong-minded and at times displayed a very stubborn streak like many of her Tudor relatives.⁹

Marriage and Edward's Death

In the spring of 1552, King Edward had the measles, and, not taking time to recover, he soon began to show symptoms of tuberculosis. As the year wore on, it became increasingly clear to those who were close to the king that he would not reach adulthood. Now, Henry VIII's will had named his daughter Mary as next in line to the throne. If Edward did not marry and produce an heir, a Catholic would rule England. Edward's Chief Minister, John Dudley (1504–1553), the Duke of Northumberland, well knew that

he would be punished by Mary for his support of the Protestant cause. He began to seek a way to prevent her being queen. Jane Grey was fourth in line to the throne and represented, for Northumberland, his only real chance to retain the power and status he had attained. He thus began to foster a close association with Henry and Frances Grey and in due time convinced them to wed their daughter Jane to his son, Guildford Dudley (1535–1554).

Early in May 1553, Jane was told by her parents that she was to be married to Guildford. Though Jane protested and utterly refused, for she despised Guildford, it was ultimately to no avail. After her father had sworn at her and cursed her, and her mother had given her an awful beating, she relented.¹⁰ So it was that on May 25, 1553, Jane was married to Guildford at Durham House in London.

Eight weeks later, on Thursday, July 6, 1553, the fifteen-year-old King Edward died, surrounded by his counselors, who had gathered at his bedside. In his final days, encouraged by John Dudley, but also very much in accord with his own thinking, he had changed his father's will and made Jane his heir. Both of his half-sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, had been disinherited by their father before Henry VIII's death, and Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, had declared both of them illegitimate, and thus technically neither could inherit the throne.¹¹

News of Edward's death was kept from Jane until Sunday, July 9, when she was informed that she had to go to the Duke of Northumberland's residence, Syon House at Isleworth on the Thames. When, two hours later, Jane entered Syon House from the riverside, she first went into what was known as the Great Hall. Gradually the room filled with people familiar to Jane, including members of the Privy Council and her immediate family, who all pledged to defend with their very lives her right to the throne.

Overwhelmed with the news of the death of her cousin, the king, and coupled with the shock of hearing herself proclaimed queen, Jane fainted. None apparently went to help her until she

eventually revived by herself and stood up and adamantly maintained that she was not the rightful queen. That was Mary's right. Dudley responded: "Your Grace doth wrong to yourself and to your house." He then recounted the terms of Edward's will, which named her as his heir. Jane's parents joined in, demanding that she accept. At this, she knelt in prayer and found the inner strength to say a little while later, while still kneeling: "If what hath been given me is lawfully mine, may thy divine Majesty grant me such grace that I may govern to thy glory and service, to the advantage of this realm."¹²

Queen Jane

The following day Jane was rowed up the Thames to the Tower of London, where monarchs traditionally stayed until their coronation day. Proclamation was made to the people of London that "Jane, by the grace of God, [is] Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith and of the Church of England and Ireland, under Christ on Earth, the Supreme Head." Most of them would have been quite surprised since Jane was hardly known in the capital. Moreover, they would have regarded Mary as the rightful heir despite the fact that she had been disinherited.

From Sunday, July 9, to Wednesday, July 19, Lady Jane Grey was queen. She signed a few documents, perhaps six in all; she dined once in state and made one or two appointments. She also resolutely refused to agree to the request of her husband and the violent demand of her mother-in-law that Guildford Dudley should be made king.

As soon as Mary had heard of Jane being made queen, however, she marched on London with an army, and all but one or two of those courtiers who had sworn to defend her to the death melted away in the face of Mary's military might. Even Jane's own father declared Mary the rightful queen, hoping that he could escape with his life.¹³ It is noteworthy that Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, did not desert Jane to her

foes. As for Jane herself, an eyewitness account indicates that she seemed relieved that she was no longer queen. Naïvely, she hoped she could simply return to her home. But Mary—soon to be Mary I—did not trust her and committed her to prison in the tower.

Jane Condemned to Death

On July 24, Jane's father-in-law, Dudley, who had been arrested, was also brought to the tower as a prisoner. In the hope of securing a pardon from the queen he recanted his Protestant beliefs, saying that he had been seduced "by the false and erroneous teachings" of the evangelicals. He requested the right to attend mass, which was granted by Mary. With disgust, Jane watched from her window in the tower as he was escorted to mass, and she was heard to say, "I pray God I, nor no friend of mine die so." Dudley was granted a small reprieve, but he could not escape death. He was beheaded on August 23, 1553.

Jane and her husband, Guildford, Dudley's son, were put on trial on November 13. Both were found guilty and sentenced to death. But Jane really did not expect to die in such a way, and initially Mary probably had little intention of carrying out the sentence. But a civil uprising known as the Wyatt Rebellion changed her mind. Sir Thomas Wyatt (1521–1554) raised a small band of soldiers in Kent who were angered when they heard Mary was planning to marry King Philip II (1527–1598) of Spain. In their minds, to have a Spanish Catholic King on the English throne was utterly unthinkable.

Wyatt was able to win his way to London by February 7, 1554. But when he entered the capital, townspeople of London refused to countenance his cause, and the rebellion collapsed. Now, intimately involved in this rebellion was Jane's father, Henry Grey. His involvement all but determined Mary to take Jane's life. On February 7, 1554, Mary accordingly signed the death warrants of "Guilford Dudley and his wife." When Henry Grey was executed,

it should be noted, he affirmed that he died “in the faith of Christ, trusting to be saved by his blood only (and not by any trumpery).”¹⁴

The Conversation with Feckenham

It was thus that Jane met John Feckenham a few days later, after her death warrant had been signed, and had the conversation noted earlier. The full conversation runs as follows:

Feckenham first speaketh: What thing is required in a Christian?

Jane: To believe in God the Father, in God the Son, in God the Holy Ghost, three persons and one God.

Feckenham: Is there nothing else required in a Christian, but to believe in God?

Jane: Yes, we must believe in him, we must love him with all our heart, with all our soul and all our mind, and our neighbor as ourself.

Feckenham: Why then faith justifieth not, nor saveth not.

Jane: Yes, verily, faith (as St. Paul saith) only justifieth.

Feckenham: Why St. Paul saith: If I have all faith without love, it is nothing.

Jane: True it is, for how can I love him in whom I trust not? Or how can I trust in him whom I love not? Faith and love agreeth both together, and yet love is comprehended in faith.

Feckenham: How shall we love our neighbour?

Jane: To love our neighbour is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and give drink to the thirsty, and to do to him as we would do to ourselves.

Feckenham: Why then it is necessary to salvation to do good works and it is not sufficient to believe.

Jane: I deny that and I affirm that faith only saveth. But it is meet for Christians, in token that they follow their master Christ, to do good works, yet may we not say that they profit to salvation. For although we have all done all that we can, yet we be unprofitable servants, and the faith only in Christ's blood saveth.

Feckenham: How many sacraments be there?

Jane: Two, the one the sacrament of baptism, and the other the sacrament of our Lord's supper.

Feckenham: No, there be seven.¹⁵

Jane: By what Scripture find you that?

Feckenham: Well, we will talk thereof hereafter. But what is signified by your two sacraments?

Jane: By the sacrament of baptism, I am washed with water and regenerated by the Sprit, and that washing is a token to me, that I am the child of God. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is offered unto me as a sure seal and testimony, that I am by the blood of Christ, which he shed for me on the cross, made partaker of the everlasting kingdom.

Feckenham: Why, what do you receive in that bread? Do you not receive the very body and blood of Christ?

Jane: No surely, I do not believe so. I think that at that supper I receive neither flesh, nor blood, but only bread and wine. The which bread when it is broken, and the wine when it is drunk, putteth me in mind, how that for my sins the body of Christ was broken, and his blood shed on the cross, and, with that bread and wine, I receive the benefits that came by [the] breaking of his body, and the shedding of his blood on the cross for my sins.

Feckenham: Why, doth not Christ speak these words: "Take, eat, this is my body?"¹⁶ Require we any plainer words? Doth not he say that it is his body?

Jane: I grant he saith so, and so he saith: “I am the vine, I am the door,”¹⁷ but yet he is never the more the vine nor door. Doth not St. Paul say that he calleth those things that are not as though they were?¹⁸ God forbid that I should say that I eat the very natural body and blood of Christ, for then either I should pluck away my redemption, either else there were two bodies, or two Christs or else two bodies, the one body was tormented on the cross, and then, if they did eat another body, then either he had two bodies, either else if his body were eaten, it was not broken upon the cross, or else if it were broken upon the cross, it was not eaten of his disciples.

Feckenham: Why is it not as possible that Christ by his power could make his body both to be eaten and broken, as to be born of a woman without the seed of man, and as to walk on the sea, having a body, and other such like miracles as he wrought by his power only?

Jane: Yes, verily, if God would have done at his supper a miracle, he might have done so, but I say he minded no work or miracle but only to break his body and shed his blood on the cross for our sins. But I pray you answer me to this one question, Where was Christ when he said: “Take, eat, this is my body”? Was he not at the table when he said so? He was at that time alive, and suffered not till the next day. Well, what took he, but bread? And what break he, but bread? And what gave he, but bread? Look what he took, he break, and look what he break, he gave; and look what he gave, that did they eat; and yet all this while he himself was at supper before his disciples, or else they were deceived.

Feckenham: You ground your faith upon such authors as say and unsay, both with a breath, and not upon the church, to whom you ought to give credit.

Jane: No. I ground my faith upon God’s Word and not upon the church. For if the church be a good church, the faith of the

church must be tried by God's Word, and not God's Word by the church, neither yet my faith. Shall I believe the church because of antiquity? Or shall I give credit to that church that taketh away from me that half part of the Lord's supper, and will let no laymen receive it in both kinds but themselves? Which thing if they deny to us, they deny us part of our salvation, and I say that is an evil church, and not the spouse of Christ, but the spouse of the devil, that altereth the Lord's supper, and both taketh from it and addeth to it. To that church I say God will add plagues, and from that church will he take their part out of the Book of Life. Do you not learn that of St. Paul, when he ministered it to the Corinthians in both kinds?¹⁹ Shall I believe that church? God forbid.

Feckenham: That was done of a good intent of the church to avoid an heresy that sprung on it.

Jane: Why, shall the church alter God's will and ordinances for a good intent? How did King Saul the Lord define?

With these and such like persuasions, he would have had me to have leaned to the church, but it would not be. There were many mo[re] things whereof we reasoned, but these were the chief.²⁰

This conversation is important, for it shows the way that Jane had clearly embraced the key doctrines of the Reformation as her own. According to Paul Zahl, there may well have been a number of others present at this conversation, and thus it might have been akin to the public debates that took place between Roman Catholics and Protestants during the Reformation era.²¹ This would explain the way the conversation highlights three key areas of dispute during the Reformation: How are men and women saved? What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper? And upon what basis does one affirm answers to these questions?

As to how a person is saved, Jane maintains what had become

the standard evangelical perspective: people are saved by faith alone. It is not faith and love or faith and good works that save, but faith alone. This faith involves both love and good works, in that true faith issues in works of love and goodness. But Jane affirms unequivocally that salvation is first and foremost based on simple trust in God.

Then in the second area of debate between Jane and Feckenham, Jane maintains that the Lord's Supper is a memorial—" [It] putteth me in mind"—and a vehicle of assurance—it is "a sure seal and testimony," and not at all an event where Christ's physical body and blood become present to the believer. This was a decisive issue of the Reformation: What is the nature of the Lord's Supper, and how is Christ present at his Table?²² Though they could not agree among themselves as to the nature of Christ's presence, all of the Reformers denied the late medieval Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, that the bread and wine became the very body and blood of Christ during the course of the celebration of the Lord's Table. Jane also by implication denied this doctrine when she rejected the idea of the ubiquity of Christ's body.²³

The Reformers also opposed the Roman Catholic practice of offering only the bread and not the wine to the laity during the Lord's Supper, a practice that had become almost uniform by the late Middle Ages. For Jane, Roman Catholic practice in this regard was an indication that the Church of Rome was the spouse of the Devil, not of Christ, since she flagrantly altered Christ's commands. This is part of a larger discussion that Feckenham had introduced by saying that Jane was listening, not to the church, but to various individual authors, whom he would have regarded as heretics. The question at the heart of the exchange between Jane and Feckenham at this point had to do with the source of authoritative doctrine. For Feckenham, that source was indeed Holy Scripture, but Scripture as it was interpreted by authorized teachers of the church. Jane, on the other hand, insisted that she

was basing her views on the Word of God alone. And it was by this Word that all doctrine had to be tested. She clearly rejected the view that only those doctrines were to be believed that were approved by the Roman Catholic Church.

Before Feckenham left, he told her he was sorry for her, since, he said, “I am sure we two shall meet,” that is, meet in heaven, as he regarded Jane as a heretic. In the face of death, though, Jane’s faith shone out clearly, and she replied:

Truth it is that we shall never meet, unless God turn your heart. For I am sure (unless you repent and turn to God), you are in an evil case, and I pray God, in the bowels of his mercy, to send you his Holy Spirit. For he hath given you his great gift of utterance, if it please him to open the eyes of your heart to his truth.²⁴

Feckenham was so impressed by Jane’s courage that he asked if he could escort her to the scaffold on the day of her execution, which was to be February 12. Jane agreed, for Mary had refused her request to have an evangelical minister accompany her.²⁵

Some Final Words

That night Jane wrote in her Greek New Testament a letter for her younger sister Katherine (1540–1568):

I have here sent you, good sister Katherine, a book, which although it be not outwardly trimmed with gold, yet inwardly it is more worth than precious stones. It is the book, dear sister, of the Law of the Lord. It is his testament and last will, which he bequeathed unto us wretches, which shall lead you to the path of eternal joy. And if you with a good mind read it, and with an earnest desire follow it, it shall bring you to an immortal and everlasting life. It will teach you to live and learn you to die.

. . . And as touching my death, rejoice as I do, good sister, that I shall be delivered of this corruption, and put on

incorruption. For I am assured that I shall for losing of a mortal life, win an immortal life.²⁶

Here we see three things about Jane's faith. She shared the Reformation love of the Scriptures: "It is more worth than precious stones." Then central to this love was Jane's clear understanding as to why the Bible was given to humanity by God: to lead sinners—those whom Jane called "us wretches"—to "eternal joy" and "immortal and everlasting life." And then we also see here Jane's deep assurance of salvation, which the Reformers also generally affirmed.

Why did Jane have such assurance? Well, a final document she wrote on the eve of her execution tells us. She wrote the following three sentences in her prayer book, the first in Latin, the second in Greek, and the final one in English:

If justice is done with my body, my soul will find mercy with God. Death will give pain to my body for its sins, but the soul will be justified before God. If my faults deserve punishment, my youth at least, and my imprudence, were worthy of excuse; God and posterity will show me favour.²⁷

She had assurance of salvation because she was justified before God, that is, made right with God, and was therefore confident of his favor.

Jane's Earthly End

Shortly before eleven o'clock on the morning of February 12, Sir John Brydges (1492–1557), the Lieutenant of the Tower of London, came to lead Jane out to the scaffold that had been built against the wall of the central White Tower, at its northwest corner (the corner closest to the Chapel of St Peter-ad-Vincula).²⁸ At the scaffold, Jane was met by Feckenham, along with several other Roman Catholic chaplains. An observer recorded what then took place.

She mounted the scaffold stairs and standing there in that chill February morning, Jane briefly addressed the small crowd gathered and urged them to know that she died “a true Christian woman” and that “I do look to be saved by no other mean, but only by the mercy of God, in the blood of his only Son Jesus Christ.” She then knelt and recited the fifty-first psalm in English. Feckenham followed in Latin, after which she told him, “God I beseech Him abundantly reward you for your kindness to me.” Feckenham was at a complete loss for words and began to weep. Seeing his distress, Jane apparently leaned over and kissed him on the cheek, and for a few moments the Roman Catholic chaplain and the evangelical queen stood hand in hand.²⁹ She then gave her gloves to a lady-in-waiting and her prayer book to Sir John Brydges. The executioner, after he had asked Jane for forgiveness, which she gave, told Jane to stand near the execution block. She knelt, fumbling to tie a handkerchief around her eyes. Once blindfolded she should have been directly in front of the execution block and could have easily laid her neck in the groove on the block. But she had misjudged the distance. Unable to locate the block, she became anxious. “Where is it? What shall I do? Where is it?” she asked, her voice faltering. No one moved to help her—perhaps unwilling to be an abettor in her death.³⁰ Finally, after what must have seemed an eternity, a bystander leaped onto the scaffold and guided her to the block. Her last words were called out in a clear voice, “Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”